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Health Commissioner Advises Against Any Unnecessary Travel As COVID-19 Cases Continue to Surge on the U.S. Mainland

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — During the Government House weekly COVID-19 press briefing, Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion urged Virgin Islanders to avoid traveling unless it is necessary because of the continuing surge of cases in the U.S. mainland.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic changes, we continue to adjust to those changes and implement local mitigation efforts to reduce the risk to our community. Hence, as commissioner of Health, I am advising against nonessential travel due to increases of COVID-19 cases in the United States mainland," Commissioner Encarnacion said. "As we all know, travel increases your chances of getting COVID-19; staying home is still the best way to protect yourself and others."

The commissioner said that while residents are strongly discouraged from traveling, she understands there are some cases when traveling is a necessity.

"If you must travel and you do not get tested at your destination, you will be referred to a local lab for testing three to five days after return and required to quarantine until you receive the test results," Commissioner Encarnacion said. "If you must travel, please use the guidelines you are so familiar with. We live in such a beautiful place in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is a popular travel destination, especially as it gets cold in other parts of the world."

Commissioner Encarnacion also reiterated that all visitors to the Territory age 5 and older must produce either a negative COVID-19 antigen molecular PCR rapid test from a test taken within five days of arriving in the Virgin Islands or a positive COVID-19 antibody test result taken within four months of arrival.

Unemployment

- To date, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) has issued 42,489 unemployment insurance checks totaling more than $32,747,791.
- The department also has issued an additional 27,780 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation checks totaling $42,687,360.
- VIDOL has issued 3,264 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance checks to self-employed Virgin Islanders totaling $5,642,041 and $1,738,081 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation.

- In total, the Bryan-Roach Administration has issued 74,402 checks totaling $82,815,273.

Stimulus
The Bureau of Internal Revenue has extended the deadline to file a 2018 income tax return or form 1040 to receive a stimulus check to November 21. The Bureau will continue to make payments until December 31, 2020.

COVID-19 cases
- Currently tracking 18 active cases
- 22,879 individuals tested to date (more than 20% of the population)
- 21,517 of those tests were negative
- 1,335 tests came back positive
- 1,296 people have recovered
- 21 fatalities to date
- No COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.
- Five COVID-19 patients are hospitalized at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas.

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